

**Written Vendor Questions regarding RFP-WEB2000:  
Demonstrating Success: A State-wide Web-Based Standards  
Of Learning Technology and On-line Testing Initiative**

- Q1. Please clarify the statement that the DOE may award more than one contract as a result of these proposals. Does this refer to the required services in general that are requested in the RFP? If so, how would the award division be determined?
- A1. **The evaluation committee may determine that more than one offeror has presented a viable option for meeting the requirements of the RFP. Should this be the case, the multiple solutions could be demonstrated in various demonstration sites.**
- Q2. Is it a correct assumption that more than one offeror may be selected to provide services to demonstration sites next spring? If so, will the final determination of the selected system be based solely on the performance of the system in the demonstration?
- A2. **Yes, the final determination could still be multiple solutions. This would provide Virginia's schools with alternatives that best meet their individual situations. The decision to renew a contract beyond the initial period will be made based on, certainly, performance, but also accounting for input from the third party review noted on page 9 of the RFP.**
- Q3. Please clarify the \$5.3 million in funding. Is this solely for the electronic delivery system or are other activities also covered by those funds?
- A3. **\$5.3 million is allocated from the state general fund for the entire project for testing with technology over this fiscal year and next fiscal year. However, this amount does not include the additional funds for department staff and related operating support costs provided to the department for this initiative, which are funded separately. Of the total \$5.3 million, approximately \$3.5 million has been earmarked specifically for the mandatory components of this proposal. The balance of the funding from the state general fund is for other components of this initiative, which may include purchase of the optional cost elements or expansion of the number of demonstration sites.**
- Q4. Will all the selected demonstration schools have Internet connectivity or must the offeror provide that?
- A4. **All of the selected schools will have Internet connectivity, however, connection speeds and Internet Service Providers may vary from school-to-school.**
- Q5. For the Feb/Mar demonstrations, how many different test forms per content area will be used? When will those forms be provided to the offeror?

- A5. **For demonstration purposes a single test form will be available. They will be provided to the offerors shortly after contract award.**
- Q6. What types of scores and reports are to be produced during the spring 2001 demonstrations? Will score keys and scale score tables be provided to the Offeror so that reports can be generated?
- A6. **Offerors are asked to provide samples of reports they would provide that contain the requirements shown in the current reports. The current reports are on the web site. Score keys and scale score tables will be provided.**
- Q7. Will there be any on-line testing in 2001 and 2002 other than the demonstrations in Feb/mar 2001?
- A7. **Live on-line testing is definitely slated for spring of 2002. Any earlier live testing would depend upon the degree of local installation, availability of the system and other factors.**
- Q8. When on-line testing is operational in 2003, are all content areas to be included in the electronic system? How does the DOE expect that the 130,000 test takers will be divided among those content areas?
- A8. **Yes, all high school content areas, with the possible exception of direct writing must be available on-line in 2003. Below is a table showing the number of tests taken for past administration test windows by subject area.**

Content Area	Spring 98	Fall 98	Spring 99	Sum 99	Fall 99	Spring 2000	Spring Avg.	Fall Avg.
English RLR	58287	8673	57609	2362	7982	58235	<b>58,044</b>	<b>8,328</b>
Algebra I	72881	7508	72943	2503	8685	72882	<b>72,902</b>	<b>8,097</b>
Geometry	52230	7266	53504	2255	7703	56298	<b>54,011</b>	<b>7,485</b>
Algebra II	43043	5696	44269	1086	5831	44540	<b>43,951</b>	<b>5,764</b>
U.S. History	60090	8150	61307	1526	8291	58488	<b>59,962</b>	<b>8,221</b>
World History to 1000	34713	6420	44635	432	6737	51168	<b>43,505</b>	<b>6,579</b>
World History from 1000	27117	5639	32834	409	7056	51304	<b>37,085</b>	<b>6,348</b>
World Geography*					3653	28796		
Earth Science	57803	9818	59039	568	10493	61571	<b>59,471</b>	<b>10,156</b>
Biology	69702	9446	67300	660	9754	67165	<b>68,056</b>	<b>9,600</b>
Chemistry	43524	5129	43811	477	5393	45542	<b>44,292</b>	<b>5,261</b>
Direct Writing	59181	9567	57238	2046	8222	58795	<b>58,405</b>	<b>8,895</b>
Testing Period Totals.	<b>578,571</b>	<b>83,312</b>	<b>594,489</b>	<b>14,324</b>	<b>89,800</b>	<b>654,784</b>		
Testing Period Average of Totals							<b>609,281</b>	<b>86,556</b>
*Test first given in Fall 99								
No Quarter averages given								

Q9. How will it be determined which students will take the SOL assessments electronically rather than in a paper-and-pencil format? Will those policies/rules change over the course of the contract?

A9. **Policies in the area have not been developed or approved by the Board. Offerors can anticipate that there will be continuous policy development around the implementation of on-line testing.**

Q10. Is it expected that there will be any testing of students who have been remediated in grades 3, 5, and 8 in this contract period? If so, please provide details about how the DOE expects this to roll out?

A10. **This will be totally dependent upon funding and the initial success of the high school portion. It is the long-term desire of Virginia to offer SOL tests on-line at every grade level.**

Q11. Please clarify the desired format for RFP responses. Are they to be formatted in the same tabular configuration as the RFP or is it simply required that responses include the same section headings as are in the RFP?

A11. **Offeror must respond using the templates provided. As noted on pages 57 and 58, text responses should be keyed to the section and page of the RFP. See the examples below.**

**Example formats:**

**To respond to the numbered sections of the RFP, please use the following format:**

Requirement	Response
(1.2.1) Test administration will incorporate the ancillary materials required in the SOL tests, such as the Periodic Table of Elements and formula sheets. These requirements may be found in the SOL test blueprints on the Department's web site. Describe the manner in which the proposed solution addresses the provision of these materials.	Our proposed solution is to...
(1.2.2) Access to the tests for students and teachers	Student and teacher access will be allowed...
(1.2.3) Input of student responses through mouse and keypad	Our solution uses both the mouse (one or two-button) and keypad and will...
(1.2.4) Manner in which students navigate inside the tests to include returning to review questions and change previously entered answers	Our solution will...

**For the templates regarding the High School technical specifications please put your responses within the appropriate cells. [Note: entries in column three are for example purposes only.]**

o Offeror responds here o

<b>Architectural Element</b>	<b>High School #3 Configuration</b>	<b>Changes/Additions Needed to Implement Proposed Solution</b>
School receives Internet via District or Locality WAN	Yes	None needed.
District/Local Internet Circuit	1.544 Mb/second, 720K realized, Tier 3 ISP	No change needed
Number of Locations served by District/Local Internet Circuit	3	No change needed
School-to-WAN Committed Data Rate	2-way microwave, 10Mb/s	Increase to 20Mb/s

o Offeror responds here o

<b>Category</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Equipment Specifications</b>	<b>Space Provided to Document Vendor Turnkey Solution</b>
<b>Printers</b>	Laser Printer	Manufacturer	Printers Plus
		Model	Superfast 200
		Network Compatibility	Network compatibility with...
		Resolution	600 dpi
		Color Capable	No
		Pages Per Minute Black	12
		Pages Per Minute Color	N/A
		RAM	64MB
		Paper Capacity	500 sheets per tray (2)

Q12. Why will the test forms be available only 2 to 4 weeks before the testing window? Would it be possible to get the electronic versions of the forms as soon as the blueprints are approved and as the paper forms are being printed?

A12. **Test forms will be provided as soon as they are available. For planning purposes Offerors should use the 2-4 week projection, knowing that this is a conservative estimate.**

Q13. Does section 1.4.4 refer to item-level data or to groups of items that assess tasks or activities?

A13. **Both. Virginia utilizes reporting categories to group items addressing similar SOLs. Additionally Virginia is moving to an item level report. Since this is**

**an optional requirement, Offerors should feel free to suggest reports and formats, as they deem appropriate.**

Q14. Does section 1.5.4 mean that the electronic system provider must also print and ship paper copies of the reports? Please clarify this requirement.

A14. **As noted in this section this is a requirement for the proposal. Offerors have been asked to explain “point of printing”. This asks that Offerors talk about whether they would provide a solution which prints all or part of the reports on site or whether they would print in another location and ship to school divisions.**

Q15. Please clarify how many students will be testing in each of the different size high schools to be selected for the demonstrations? Will they test concurrently?

A15. **Offerors should anticipate that the total testing population for the demonstration period would be 15,000 as noted in the RFP. The distribution in the demonstration sites will vary from small schools to large ones. Offerors should take their guidance from the table above (page 2) and the table posted on the DOE website that shows the number of tests administered (by school) in spring 2000. Any of the high schools could be demonstration sites. While it is unlikely all students will test concurrently, it is possible and Offerors should plan accordingly.**

Q16. Does “concurrent student users” (Page 24 of the RFP) mean that the students are all testing at exactly the same time on the same day, or does it mean they are testing in the same testing window?

A16. **See A15 above. Again, offerors should plan for the maximum load on the system during the demonstration period. Please refer to page 24 (2.4.1) that notes the anticipation of 300 concurrent users in each school.**

Q17. What is meant by “current and concurrent” students on page 24 of the RFP?

A17. **See A15 and A16.**

Q18. For the demonstrations is it required that the vendor provide a backup ISP for the participating schools’ connecting to the Internet?

A18. **No. The vendor is not required to provide a backup ISP for schools at any time in the project. The vendor is expected to provide a backup to its own ISP for full implementation in 2003, but not during the demonstration period.**

Q19. In 2003 does the DOE expect that there will be 130,000 concurrent users in all 3 test windows or just in the spring? If this is the expected spring volume, what will be the expected volume in the other test windows?

- A19. **This figure is the spring window. Other test windows are much smaller. See the table above in response to question # 8 (page 2). Offerors should anticipate the numbers of tests administered to rise as students begin to fall into the retesting mode to garner verified credits for graduation.**
- Q20. What is meant by ad hoc reports in section 2.6.1? Does the Department want users to be able to format their own reports?
- A20. **The intent of 2.1.6 is for the Department to be able to produce ad hoc reports.**
- Q21. Does the DOE want the calculators to be incorporated in the functions of the electronic delivery system or is it acceptable for students to use the current calculators provided in the schools?
- A21. **Offerors may chose a method that suits their solution. However, the potential of technology proposed should be maximized.**
- Q22. What parts of the response are to be included in the electronic version of the response? Only the narrative? Must additional materials, such as the sample reports also be included? Must they then be converted to Word? Are the costs to be included?
- A22. **The complete response must be provided both in print and electronic formats. Offerors with materials that are not amenable to Word should consider using PDF format for both electronic (for example, a hyperlink to an attached PDF file) and paper copies. Please note page 58 (C.4 ) which requires that the cost proposal be separate. The cost proposal must also be provided electronically.**
- Q23. The term “turnkey” is used throughout the RFP. Please define what is meant by this term?
- A23. **Turnkey refers to the provision of all components of a proposed solution. The objective is to have the Offeror provide all necessary equipment so that the demonstration of the solution can be viewed fairly and not dependent upon that which might be in the selected demonstration site.**
- Q24. “Information from the on-line test administrations must merge back into the total state testing data pool that will continue to reside with the current contractor.” What is meant by the term merge? Is an interface from the on-line provider to the current contractor required, or must the data files simply be compatible so that they can be combined?
- A24. **The objective is to have the data from the on-line testing compiled together with that from the non-on-line testing to form the total state test data pool. Offerors should plan that the data emerging from the on-line solution be in a format that is compatible with that used by the current contractor. Offerors**

**may find the current file layout (Harcourt File Structure--Attachment A) on the DOE website--**

**<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Technology/soltech/soltech.html>.**

- Q25. May we assume that only the demographic data displayed on the current SOL reports are the data that must be captured before and during testing?
- A25. **No, please refer to section 1.4.1, which discusses the anticipated Federal ethnic/racial category requirements. Additionally, we have placed the 2000-2001 end-of-course answer document on the website. Offerors should refer to this document for the latest information on demographic requirements. Also, refer to the answer for question #41 below.**
- Q26. For what purpose would data be retrieved (Section 1.9.5)? Is there a requirement to compare current Test Administrations to previous years Test Administrations?
- A26. **This optional section addresses the potential for schools and the state to utilize historical testing information for program development purposes. Offerors may provide options as they deem appropriate.**
- Q27. Who will be the evaluators of the proposals? Will they also evaluate the results of the demonstrations next spring?
- A27. **The evaluation committee will consist of local and national educators familiar with test, educational reform, school environments and technology applications in educational settings. They will not evaluate the demonstrations.**
- Q28. How many users should we assume for the final years of the contract beyond 2003? Please provide a breakout by spring, summer, and fall test windows.
- A28. **Approximately 650,000 end-of-course tests were administered in the spring of 2000. Offerors should use this as a floor level projection. As students continue to pursue verified credit these numbers will rise. While the number of initial test takers will be relatively constant, retakes will rise. Again, refer to table in response to question # 8 above (page 2).**
- Q29. Does the department anticipate the primary use of the system will take place during school hours? What type of access to the system is expected to take place during non-school hours?
- A29. **Yes, however, the potential exists for the expansion to off-hours use. Currently there are alternative school situations that operate outside the traditional school hours. Offerors must remember that the majority of the time the system is available is NOT during the testing period. Remediation and instruction are prime candidates for off-hours' use.**

Q30. Regarding E-Rate Eligibility: Is the estimate of \$25 million per year realistic? Over the past two years the average was heavily weighted toward internal connections which is now a second priority by the SLD. During the current year (FY-3) schools throughout the country have experienced reduced discount rates because of the lowering of the priority of internal connections. These trends seem to indicate that discounts rates will continue to decline. Has VA DOE assessed the impact of such a scenario on this RFP and subsequent risks that would inevitably follow? If yes, what was the DOE assessment and what corrective actions were identified to mitigate the risks?

A30. **Virginia schools and libraries have received about \$24 million in commitments per year. According to SLD statistics for the first two years of the program, telecommunications and dedicated services account for the majority of funding. Internal connection commitments are about half that of telecommunications. Internal connection funding is not guaranteed and should not be budgeted in responses. However, telecommunications services and Internet access have been fully funded each year of the program and will likely be fully funded in the future.**

Q31. What is the total amount of money available to the offeror(s) during the demo period? (Referring to Page 5 of the RFP, bullet points 3 and 5.) It appears that there may be monies over and above the \$3.5 million that was discussed at the conference this past Tuesday.

A31. **Only \$3.5 million is available for the successful offeror(s) for the mandatory components of the RFP. The balance of the funding from the state general fund is for other components of this initiative, which may include purchase of the optional cost elements or expansion of the number of demonstration sites.**

Q32. Please explain how the funding for the demo period will be allocated to the offeror(s) in respect to hardware, software, services, and infrastructure. (Refer to page 5, bullets 3 & 5 and page 8, paragraph 1.) Will the offeror(s) be required to fund the entire demo site(s) or are the offeror(s) being asked to fund only the parts that exceed the State's minimum requirements for the demo site?

A32. **\$3.5 million is available to the successful offeror(s) for the mandatory components of the RFP. The allocation of these funds may depend upon the nature of the successful proposal. There are other sources of funds (including state general fund monies and VPSA note proceeds) for limited equipment purchases for the demonstration sites or to make desired infrastructure improvements that may go beyond the scope of the mandatory components of this RFP. The application of those sources of funds will also be dependent upon the solutions proposed and the demonstration sites that are selected. The offeror(s) should expect that costs associated with infrastructure or specialized equipment unique to their proposed solution must be included in the proposal and must be furnished within the overall costs included in the proposal.**



Q33. \$5.3 million was listed on page 5 to implement the statewide SOL program. Is that the total budget allocation and is there a budget dollar amount that has been formulated for the pilot part of the project?

**A33. Refer to answer for question 31 above.**

Q34. Will Harcourt provide ALL of the data and summary calculations for reporting purposes?

**A34. Harcourt will provide the raw-to-scale-score conversion tables. Other data may be provided depending upon the actual solutions proposed.**

Q35. If multiple awards are accounted for, how will the vendors be evaluated? Will the DOE take the top three or four proposals submitted, or is there a weight analysis for multiple winners?

**A35. At the discretion of the Evaluation Review Panel and in keeping with the scoring formulas and guidelines in Section 5 of the RFP, multiple proposals may be selected for the demonstration portion of the Initiative.**

Q36. Reference: page 11 of 73, Implementation Timing For The Demonstration Project. Question/Request: Please provide DOE's expectations/goals for each milestone. Is the offeror expected to have the complete Web based system running in January 2001 for the Demonstration Phase?

**A36. Yes**

Q37. Reference: page 9 of 73, Innovation in the RFP. Technology solutions may include traditional wired, satellite, wireless, or a combination of each. Question: Since some of the schools in the demonstration project currently have Internet service that is "not good and downtime is frequent". Will the offeror be penalized for proposing a solution that includes an implementation schedule for upgrading the Internet services at these schools that is completed after Jan. 2001?

**A37. No.**

Q38. Reference: General. Question: Please confirm that each school site during the Demonstration Phase and Post-Demonstration Phase will provide the required infrastructure including hardware, system software, network software, third party software and any internal building site wiring for the implementation.

**A38. Refer to page 8 (Scope of Work). The turnkey solution for the demonstration phase will require offeror to "install its solution in cooperation with assigned schools and school division without the disruption of classes. Each demonstration site will have a technical contact named for the Offeror. Demonstration schools agree to allow Offeror access to school buildings after school hours and during holidays. Offeror must bear the cost of solution**

**installation including school system upgrades and improvements (if Offeror's solution requires infrastructure not already available within the individually assigned schools). Offeror may retain ownership of installed equipment at conclusion of demonstration period, but must ensure that demonstration site infrastructure is, at a minimum, equal to its pre-demonstration project status."**

Q39. Reference: page 15 of 73, Response 1.2.6 - "Manner in which items implying the use of manipulatives will be addressed." Question: Please clarify. What is meant by "manipulatives"?

**A39. Refer to page 15 of RFP. Various SOL tests require that the student have available certain ancillary materials for use during testing. These are outlined in the test blueprints and include such things as the Periodic Table of Elements, calculators, rulers, and formula sheets. Offerors must propose solutions that address the manner in which such materials will be made available during test administration. The test blueprints are available at <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Assessment/soltests/home.html>.**

Q40. Reference: page 16 of 73, Response 1.3 and 1.3.1 - Interface with the Existing Assessment Contractor, "Offerors must accept the test forms from this Offeror for use in the on-line system proposed." Question: When individual student SOL test results are printed, they can be printed to match the variation of the Harcourt Educational Measurement test form taken by the student. However, while completing the test on-line, the student will see one question per screen page. Is this an acceptable solution for this requirement?

**A40. Offerors should feel free to propose as they see fit regarding the manner in which students will be presented the test questions in the on-line situation.**

Q41. Reference: page 17 of 73, Response 1.4.1 "Offerors must plan for the upcoming Federal requirements regarding racial/ethnic category changes." Question: Can the state provide these category changes, a web site, or contact person where they may be obtained?

**A41. Beginning with the 2000 Census, the federal government changed the standards for maintaining data on race and ethnicity. Where, previously, individuals had to be reported in one and only one racial/ethnic category, they may now be reported in up to five categories. It is anticipated that the US Department of Education will phase in this requirement as early as the 2003-04 school year. For more information on the new standards, see the Federal Register for Thursday, October 30, 1997.**

**<http://www.whitehouse.gov/OMB/fedreg/1997.html>**

Q42. Reference: page 17 of 73, Response 1.4.3 "What student demographic data is available in your product for reporting with performance data?" Question: Can

the state provide a list of the minimum required or desired student demographic data?

- A42. Refer to Harcourt File Structure (Attachment A) on the DOE website: <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Technology/soltech/soltech.html>. This document contains the required student demographic data.**
- Q43. Reference: page 19 of 73, Response 1.7.3, "Availability of the data after test administration, the current contractor and the Department to include the length of time such information will be retained, manner of retention and security of retained information." Question: Please provide the Department's guidelines on retained information, such as length of time.
- A43. It is anticipated that the Offerors will need to retain any and all information that is to be forwarded to the original contractor (Harcourt) until such time as the data are verified as correct and loaded into the total-statewide database. Once that sign-off has happened, data need not be retained. However, if an Offeror proposes a solution which utilizes the information for testing for some value-added purpose such as remedial instruction, the Offeror must include the amount of time they are anticipating the data would be available for such purposes.**
- Q44. Reference: page 22 of 73, Response 2.1.11 - "Describe how student answers to SOL test questions are saved in the database." Question: Is the Department looking for a technical response on how the student answers to the SOL questions are stored? Please clarify.
- A44. Yes, a technical answer. For example, will it be numeric or alpha in the manner in which the student is actually responding.**
- Q45. Reference: page 25 of 73, Response 2.5 - Server Requirements. "The Offeror is expected to propose a turnkey solution that includes hosting of all demonstration database and Web servers at the Demonstration Center." Question: Where is the Demonstration Test Center located? Is this a Center that will be provided specifically for this project during the Demonstration Phase? Are there DOE guidelines as to the proposed Center's location?
- A45. It is expected that the Demonstration Test Center will be located at the Offeror's/Offerors' premises. However, DOE will want to be able to access the tests just as any of the demonstration site schools will access the tests.**
- Q46. Reference: page 8 of 73, Response Scope of Work. "Offeror must bear the cost of solution installation including school system upgrades and improvements." Question: There is no reference of this requirement for the DOE Demonstration site. Is this requirement the same as the school sites requirement mentioned above? Please specify.

**A46. See answer to question 45 above. As anticipated demonstration site(s) will be located at Offeror's premises; Offeror will bear that cost. DOE wants to be able to test the Offeror's solution AS IF it were a school with students in a testing period.**

Q47. Who is the 3rd party proposal evaluator?

**A47. At this time, the third party evaluator for the demonstration projects has not been determined.**

Q48. Please specify the template that should be used for vendor responses. The RFP specifies the web site <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Technology/soltech/soltech.html> for the template. Are vendors supposed to delete items in the "Response" and "Importance" columns of the RFP for answers or is there a separate template?

**A48. Refer to answer and example given for format guidelines in question # 11. Please download the MS Word version of the RFP to cut and paste relevant sections into your proposal.**

Q49. Can multiple RFP's be submitted by a main contractor? (The multiple RFP's to have different solutions with different secondary contractors.)

**A49. Yes.**

Q50. In the absence of a unique statewide student number, do some divisions have their own student numbering system and does the state want this number captured with the student demographic data?

**A50. Yes, refer to the Harcourt File Layout (Attachment A). It is available at <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Technology/soltech/soltech.html>.**

Q51. Please elaborate on and define the term "template" used throughout the RFP, specifically as it is used in the phrase "User Response Template." Are the templates simply a guide for offerors to prepare a proposal response item-by-item or an actual table that should be copied from the RFP and pasted into the proposal with the offeror's text inserted into each section/cell?

**A51. Refer to format guidelines outlined in question #11 (page 3-4) above.**

Q52. How does the contractor obtain the pre-id files?

**A52. It is anticipated that school divisions will transfer pre-loading data in a variety of ways including (but not limited to) delimited ASCII files, sent as attachment, mailed on disk, or FTP'd to Offeror.**

Q53. How does the contractor get the student enrollment counts?

**A53. DOE will provide them.**

Q54. Regarding the requirement for offerors to submit an electronic version of the proposal, "[O]ne soft (electronic) copy of the Offeror's response in Microsoft Word 97 format": Would the VA DOE consider other Microsoft Office Suite programs to accompany the MS Word version of the proposal text, e.g. project schedules in MS Project and cost proposal in MS Excel, etc?

**A54. The Offeror's response must be in the Microsoft Word 97 format. Ancillary, expanded, or supportive materials may be included in Microsoft Office Suite programs (The Department has this suite available and would require no special purchase of software to review materials.) as long as source response materials are in Word 97.**

Q55. Please elaborate on the requirement for offerors to submit information relating to Small/Minority/Women Owned Businesses Subcontracting and Reporting. Specifically, do the Small/Minority/Women Owned Businesses have to reside in the Commonwealth of Virginia? Are all proposed Small/Minority/Women Owned Businesses required to be licensed to do business in the Commonwealth of Virginia? What criteria define a Small Business?

**A55. Small/Minority/Women-Owned Businesses do not have to reside in Virginia, but they must be registered as such with the Dept of Minority Business in the state in which they do reside. Any vendor that receives compensation from the Commonwealth for services rendered must have a Virginia Business License. A Small Business is defined by Commonwealth of Virginia Procurement regulations as a vendor that employs < 100 employees or has less than \$1,000,000 in annual gross receipts.**

Q56. Section 1.9.2, Page 19: Who needs access to the data requested by this Requirement? Does this Requirement query item-level results or final student test-level results? Who do you anticipate entering, updating, and deleting information? Is this Requirement directed towards the electronic security of student-level data?

**A56. Those needing access to data will include teachers, principals, central offices, and DOE. Offeror is free to choose whether it is item-level or final student test-level results. Offeror will enter, update, and delete information upon authorization of DOE. This requirement IS directed toward electronic security of student-level data.**

Q57. Number 5, Page 58: How does a vendor invoke the protections of Section 11-52D of the Code of Virginia?

**A57. Protections of this section are invoked by the vendor clearly stating in their proposal what information is proprietary to their business. It is an area that**

**must be dealt with carefully as many vendor will declare information proprietary when it is not.**

Q58. P.7: Selection of Suitable Offeror Solution. Can you elaborate on the requirements of the demonstration site provided to DOE?

**A58. See response to questions 45 & 46 above (pages 11-12).**

Q59. P. 11: The implementation timing for the demonstration projects reflects two activities associated with the demonstration for the selected vendor(s) in January-March, 2001 - and followed by an operational readiness test in January, 2003. What services or deliverables, if any, does DOE anticipate from the selected vendor(s) between March 2001 and January 2003?

**A59. During that period, high schools will be selecting the option most appropriate and installing necessary hardware and software. Potential exists for live testing once in-place.**

Q60. P. 18: Can you elaborate on the system performance information that DOE considers necessary?

**A60. Amount of time to take test (outside of student reflection times), response rate to keystrokes, maximum hits on server at any one time, downtime (if any), throughput at/on the Offeror's server.**

Q61. P. 54: Optional Cost Elements: If optional services are proposed and priced in this section, does DOE plan to acquire any of these options?

**A61. Acquisition is dependent upon the quality of the response and available funds.**

Q62. PP 57-58: Written proposals are to be submitted with the cost segment as a separate volume. Does DOE also wish to have separate electronic copies for the technical and the cost segments?

**A62. Yes.**

Q63. P 58, # 4: "Presentation of Proposals" requires that responses to the cost aspect of the proposal be presented in a separate volume. Responses to Section 2.12 (school building hardware requirements) include pricing data (see pp. 36-37 and pp. 41, 43, 45). Should these entries be completed in the technical proposal or make reference to the cost provided in Section 2.13?

**A63. These should appear in both places. It is critical that the cost section, bound separately, be inclusive of all costs. Offerors should include the items from section 2.13 in the cost proposal section.**

Q64. What kind of contract do you expect to award in support of this RFP? (firm-fixed price, cost-plus-fixed-fee, etc.)?

**A64. Firm-Fixed Price.**

Q65. With regards to RFP Response 1.2.2, when, if ever, do you want test proctors/teachers to have access to the SOL tests? As we understand the current philosophy, teachers are not “encouraged” to see the SOL tests prior to or during the test conduct.

**A65. Access is limited only to the time of student testing; teachers are not to have prior access to test forms.**

Q66. With regards to RFP Response 1.2.6, how is a “manipulative” defined? Please provide an example.

**A66. See response to question # 39 (page 10) above.**

Q67. With regard to RFP Response 2.5.5, we assume that a “Business Contingency Plan” is synonymous with a “Disaster Recovery Plan”. Is this correct? If not, please define. Are you expecting this plan as part of the proposal or is this something the vendor will provide after the contract is awarded?

**A67. Yes. That is correct. The plan is not required for the Demonstration Projects. The vendor will be expected to provide the plan prior to statewide testing in 2003.**

Q68. In an effort to introduce a “more innovative” approach, is it acceptable for a company to submit more than one proposal?

**A68. Yes.**

Q69. PP. 1-4: On page 1 of the RFP and again on page 3 the mission of the SOL Technology Initiative is defined as “the implementation of on-line, Internet-based Standards of Learning instruction, remediation, and testing in all Virginia high schools by 2003.” During the Pre-Proposal Conference we recall that presenters stated that on-line testing was an initial priority of the infrastructure to be created, but the delivery of on-line instruction and remediation will be delayed until later. Is this accurate? If so, will the state solicit proposals for the delivery of on-line instruction and remediation, or will local divisions be able to select and purchase instructional and remedial content and delivery for their own technology infrastructure?

**A69. Yes, the initiative includes on-line instruction and remediation (future implementation). It is anticipated that local divisions will be able to select and purchase instructional and remedial content and delivery for their own technology infrastructure. Refer to Cost Option # 2 on page 54 of the RFP.**

Q70. P. 1: The RFP states that the “DOE may award more than one contract for proposals submitted as a part of this RFP.” Does this mean that more than one prime contractor solution may emerge from the demonstration phase with the recommendation to local divisions for purchase and implementation? Or, does it mean that the DOE may choose the hardware and connectivity solution proposed by one prime contractor and the testing software proposed by a different prime contractor; i.e., choosing elements of different solutions as recommendations to the local divisions?

**A70. Yes, more than one prime contractor solution may emerge from the demonstration phase.**

Q71. On page 8 the RFP states, “... successful demonstration solution(s) will be communicated in their entirety to all school divisions, including DOE requested changes and enhancements to the solution(s) made during the course of the initiative.” Are these communications to school divisions authorizations from state government to expend VPSA monies to purchase only those solutions that were successful during the demonstration phase, or are the communications to school divisions recommendations from state government that are not mandatory?

**A71. Complete information concerning the demonstration solutions will be communicated to school divisions. They will be free to make their own choices concerning appropriate purchases. The enabling legislation does not give the Department of Education authority to direct division purchasing. However, one of the primary purposes of the “turnkey” demonstrations is to provide integrated solutions that will have a proven record of effectiveness. It is also anticipated that some vendor solutions may only function correctly with vendor specific equipment/software/ etc. and this may be an incentive for divisions to select complete vendor proposed solutions.**

Q72. P. 5: The DOE will expend up to \$3.5 million to support up to five demonstration projects by five offerors during the first five or six months of 2001. Is this statement accurate? If it is accurate, and if there are five demonstrations supported, would the DOE split the available money equally among the five offerors, leaving a maximum of approximately \$700,000 for each?

**A72. The number of demonstration solutions is dependent upon the number of proposals. If more than one solution is chosen, Offerors should not assume an equal distribution of the monies available.**

Q73. P. 8: Why is it possible, or encouraged, that local school divisions not participating in the demonstration project “may use legislative funds to purchase technology components that are compatible with Offeror solutions being field-tested during the demonstration?” What if a school division was to purchase technology components from an Offeror whose solution was not recognized as a successful solution by the state and third party evaluators?



**A73. As indicated in the previous response, the Department of Education has no authority to direct school divisions to use funds to make specific purchases.**

Q74. PP. 3, 15: Currently, the SOL tests are given three times each school year. Does the DOE anticipate more frequent administration of different forms of the test with electronic delivery of the SOL tests?

**A74. Yes, that is a long-term goal.**

Q75. P. 16: The technical/research contractor (for the SOL, this is Harcourt) typically specifies a sampling plan to ensure that all field test forms are answered by a representative sample of students. Will the technical/research contractor continue to specify the sampling plan for field test forms administered via electronic testing?

**A75. Yes.**

Q76. P. 17: Under the section dealing with Student Demographic Data, requirement 1.4.4 asks how the testing software product “reports student performance against a specific task or activity.” Does this mean how the product disaggregates data by demographic variables, or how the product rolls up performance on individual items into skills, strands, and domain totals? If the latter, why does this requirement not appear in Response 1.5 – Scoring and Reporting?

**A76. Offerors should note that requirement 1.4.4 is optional. Offerors’ solutions that provide reports not currently in use are welcome. Requirement 1.5 is mandatory.**

Q77. PP. 17-18: Questions about Scoring and Reporting. When the high school SOL course tests are administered “live” for the first time in the spring of 2003, will the development/technical/scoring contractor (currently Harcourt) continue to produce paper reports of the high school tests based upon the data transmitted to them by the electronic testing contractor(s), or will the only high school SOL reports produced be from the electronic contractor(s)?

**A77. Until DOE sees the proposed solutions, the Department is unable to respond. DOE desires that reports be produced with a few steps and/or intermediaries between the Offeror and report recipients.**

Q78. Must the paper reports that must be produced by the electronic contractor(s) (1.5.4) copy in format and style and quality those produced by Harcourt? Must the electronic reports also mirror the current paper reports produced by Harcourt?

**A78. The same information/data currently reported is required. Offeror is free to choose format and style. Electronic reports need not necessarily mirror current paper reports.**

Q79. Must electronic and paper reports produced by the electronic contractor mirror all the levels of reporting produced by the current contractor? Who may/should have access to each level of each report?

**A79. Electronic contractor reports SHOULD mirror all the levels of reporting produced by current contractor. Student records are confidential. All others, once confirmed/verified, are public records.**

Q80. Under a post-equating model, does the DOE want a “raw score/ number possible” reported immediately after testing but prior to equating? Wouldn’t there be risks that incorrect inferences about the meaning of these raw scores would be drawn by those looking for indications of pass/fail?

**A80. DOE would not object to having raw score/number possible reports prior to equating. Incorrect inferences could be drawn. Offeror should address with appropriate disclaimers if put forth in solution.**

Q81. Under the post-equating model, would it be the responsibility of the electronic contractor(s) to receive the equating tables from the research/technical contractor and then go back and create new reports (electronic and paper) for all students who took the test on their system; the reports having at least the following characteristics: raw scores/number possible; scaled scores; performance standard achieved?

**A81. Yes.**

Q82. Under the pre-equating model, will it be the responsibility of the electronic contractor(s) to have already pre-loaded the equating tables and thus be prepared to produce electronic and paper reports immediately after testing that give all relevant raw, scaled and performance level scores?

**A82. Yes.**

Q83. P. 19: How is 1.7.3 different from 1.9.5?

**A83. 1.7.3 is mandatory and relates to availability of data to DOE. 1.9.5 is optional and refers to proposed method of archiving historical data and is directed at school and classroom level.**

Q84. P. 19: Given the importance of research showing the comparability (or lack thereof) between paper and pencil and electronic testing (especially for students moving from one testing mode to the other) why is this an optional requirement in this RFP? Who will do this research for the state?

**A84. DOE determined that making this a mandatory requirement would have restricted potential offerors. It is yet to be determined who will perform the research.**

Q85. P. 20: In 1.9.6 it appears that the offeror is invited to describe how the electronic contractor(s) can report student data against local norms (classroom, building, district) and national norms. Is this accurate?

**A85. 1.9.6 should refer to “local (classroom, building, and district) performance.” RFP is NOT asking for comparisons of student data to norms (local or national). See Addendum #1 to the RFP issued November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2000 and available at: <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Technology/soltech/soltech.html>.**

A86. Does the DOE wish to have SOL course test data reported in a norm-referenced fashion, especially national norms? Is it up to the offeror to suggest a national norms set that is appropriate?

**A86. No to both parts. See answer to question # 85.**

A87. Unless there is a single electronic contractor for all divisions, how would it be practically possible for the electronic contractor to pull together all the local data on classrooms, buildings, and districts (divisions) to make accurate local normative comparisons?

**A87. NOT APPLICABLE, See above, # 85.**

Q88. PP. 29, 46: How many high schools are there in the state? (Response 2.12 states that there are 287. Requirement 2.13.4 states that there are 389.)

**A88. There are 389 schools in Virginia with a high grade of 9 or above. Of these, 287 are schools that contain only grades 9 through 12. The remainder house lower grades as well as the high school grades. The vendor should use 389 for planning purposes. Be aware that this number changes from year to year as schools open and close.**

Q89. Will the procurement of necessary hardware and network infrastructure be covered under the Commonwealth of Virginia’s Seat Management Initiative?

**A89. Seat Management is basically a service contract for outsourcing of technology services. As far as we know, divisions will be able to use Seat Management Initiative contracts to purchase services. Vendors may want to check with the Department of Information Technology (DIT), [www.dit.state.va.us](http://www.dit.state.va.us), on the substance of the contracts. Virginia Public School Authority (VPSA) notes proceeds may be used for durable goods that have an anticipated life expectancy of at least five years. Therefore, funds available to schools from VPSA funding may not be used for service**

**contracts like seat management. It is anticipated that divisions will also use local funds to achieve the goals of this initiative. There is a local match requirement of 20% of state fund allocation, with 25% of that being used for training. Approximately \$11 million annually in local funds will be required to match state VPSA notes. Divisions will likely be interested in using match money for seat management as well as other potential successful solutions. Local funds may be used for seat management and we encourage vendors to offer solutions that meet division needs.**

Q90. In regard to funding, how is the \$ 2.06 million to support the initiative's demonstration programs to be applied?

**A90. See answer to number 32 (page 8) above.**

Q91. Will all SOL testing content be supplied by VDOE and/or approved third party?

**A91. Testing content comes from Harcourt Educational Measurement. See 1.3 on page 16.**

Q92. Can a vendor be a subcontractor to more than one prime offeror?

**A92. Yes. However, subcontractor portions of the proposal must be submitted with (as a part of) the proposal of the prime offeror. NO partial proposals will be accepted.**

Q93. Is it required that a sub-contractor to Offerors proposal attend the mandatory pre-proposal conference?

**A93. No.**

Q94. Is a transcript available of the mandatory pre-proposal conference?

**A94. No, however, a videotape copy of the meeting is available.**